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MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

RESOLUTION

New Delhi, the 1st March 1963

No. 3/2/63-Pub.II.—On the night of Thursday, the 28th February 1963, death removed from our midst a life which had guided the destinies of the Republic of India for twelve long years after its inception. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, affectionately known to vast millions of our people as Rajen Babu, was a true disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. He had a deep belief in non-violence and practised it both in spirit and in deed. Always simple and unassuming in his personal life, Dr. Rajendra Prasad came to be regarded throughout the length and breadth of the country as a personification of all that is good, noble and lofty in the Indian tradition.

2. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was born on December 3, 1884 in a remote village in Bihar. His early career in school and college held out great promise and his years at the Calcutta University were years of brilliant academic achievement. He entered the legal profession and practised at the bar in the High Courts of Calcutta and Patna.

3. He came under Gandhiji's direct influence during the Champaran Satyagraha movement in 1917 and gave up his flourishing legal practice in 1920 to devote himself exclusively to the cause of Indian Independence. Ever after that, he remained in the forefront of the National struggle for freedom and was the life-force of the Congress Organisation in Bihar. He courted imprisonment during the non-cooperation movement in 1920, civil disobedience campaign in 1931-32 and the "Quit India" movement in 1942.

4. He was among the most important leaders of the Indian National Congress and was elected its President for four terms, the last being in 1947. In September 1946, he joined the Interim Government formed under the leadership of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and held the portfolio of Food and Agriculture. In December 1946, he was unanimously elected President of the Constituent Assembly of India. As President of that Assembly, he took a leading part in giving shape to the Constitution of the Republic of India.

5. In 1950 when the new Constitution of India was inaugurated, the choice of the first President for the Republic very fittingly fell on him. It was an eloquent expression of the Nation's gratitude to this unassuming leader, who had given the best years of his life to the National cause. He was elected President in 1952 and again in 1957 and laid down the reins of this high office in May 1962.

6. A man of deep learning and a versatile mind, he led a life of extreme simplicity. Apart from his abiding interest in law and politics, his personality also found expression in the field of literature and humanitarian activities. In times of calamity the country always found in him a leader of unsurpassed zeal. His services as President of the Bihar Central Relief Committee at the time when Bihar was visited by a severe earthquake in 1934 deserve special mention. Suffering though he was from chronic asthma, handicapped by a weak physique, he trekked all over the stricken area bringing succour to the victims of the earthquake.

7. Himself a writer of repute, he played a leading role in the propagation and development of Hindi and also in the growth of Indian Journalism. Among his important publications are:—INDIA DIVIDED; ATMA KATHA (Autobiography); MAHATMA GANDHI IN CHAMPARAN.

8. In an age of transitory values and forgotten ideals, Rajen Babu represented something lasting. Of him, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu has aptly said: "His rare intellectual endowments combined with surpassing sweetness of his nature; the nobility of his character, his extraordinary gift of self-effacement and self-sacrifice make him perhaps the most widely or personally loved of all our leaders". Mahatma Gandhi himself has described him more than once in his speeches and writings—"A perfect gentleman—a model of gentility".

V. VISWANATHAN, Secy.